

# Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC)

## Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)

### 2007 DROUGHT AND BURN BAN SITUATION REPORT # 17 14 February 2008, 1400 Hours

*New Information in Bold Italic Type*

#### SUMMARY

Statewide precipitation for the previous water year (1 October 2006 through 30 September 2007) was below normal. Statewide precipitation for the period from October 1, 2006 until January 17, 2008 was below normal and statewide precipitation in each successive shorter time period is below normal. Statewide precipitation for the period from January 1, 2008 to January 17, 2008 is 52% of normal. Precipitation greater than 85% of normal is considered to be in the normal range.

#### EXECUTIVE ACTION

**EOC Activation:** The Virginia Emergency Operations Center is at ***Response Operations*** and is operating with ***limited augmented*** staff ***in response to multiple wildfires and high winds that impacted the Commonwealth beginning 9 February.***

**State of Emergency:** Governor Timothy M. Kaine declared a Statewide Emergency on 18 October 2007 and imposed a statewide ban on all open burning. The statewide ban on open burning was lifted by Governor Timothy M. Kaine on 15 November. The Statewide Emergency remains in effect to deal with potential or actual drought related issues.

Governor Kaine requested that the Secretary of the US Department of Agriculture declare Virginia a statewide disaster area due to reductions in farm production caused by drought and high temperatures in 2007. The Acting US Secretary of Agriculture designated 78 additional counties and 34 independent cities as primary natural disaster areas on 18 October 2007 due to reductions in farm production caused by drought and high temperatures that occurred from January 1, 2007, and continuing.

Governor Kaine sent a letter to all localities dated 29 November 2007 advising them that the most effective water restrictions are those developed at the local level and asked that localities review their drought water conservation and contingency plans associated with public waterworks and if there was no current drought plan, one should be developed. Governor Kaine also asked localities to review their local ordinances requiring mandatory non-essential water use restrictions during declared emergencies and assure that the ordinances are consistent with the Virginia Drought Assessment and Response Plan and if the locality has not adopted such ordinances, they should consider the development and adoption of these. DEQ – [COV Drought Response Plan](#)

**Executive Order:** [Executive Order 57 \(2007\)](#)

**ESF 15 – External Affairs:** Public Affairs Officers from VDEM, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Forestry and Department of Health and representatives from VDH Office of Drinking Water conducted a conference call on 6 February to discuss development of a comprehensive state communication plan. Agencies were asked to submit information to VDEM by 15 February to develop the draft plan that will be presented to the Drought Monitoring Task Force at the end of February.

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### WEATHER FORECAST

**Southwest VA: Thursday, 14 Feb:** Sunny; high temperatures in the upper 40's to low 50's; south winds 5 to 10 MPH. **Thursday night:** Partly cloudy; low temperatures in the upper 20's to low 30's; southwest winds 5 to 10 MPH. **Friday, 15 Feb:** Mostly cloudy; 30% chance of rain in the afternoon; high temperatures in the upper 40's to low 50's; west winds 5 to 10 MPH. **Friday night:** Cloudy; 30% chance of rain; low temperatures in the upper 20's to mid 30's; light and variable winds.

### OPERATIONS SECTION

- ESF 5 – Emergency Management:** Posting event related items to WebEOC under event titled “WebEOC, 2007-10 Drought and Burn Ban”; Participating as member of the Drought Monitoring Task Force; assessing the impact across the Commonwealth; limited exemption of hours worked for hay and feed carriers was extended until 0600 hours, 15 April 2008. VDEM Operations Director, Harry Colestock, and VDEM Recovery and Mitigation Director, George Roarty, attended a North Carolina Emergency Management Forum in Asheville, North Carolina, that discussed the drought in the Southeastern US. Points discussed for North Carolina were:
- Description of a tiered system to identify water systems vulnerability to drought and a group of functional state task forces to address specific drought issues
  - State actions included water basin meetings, tracking of public water system status and promotion of conservation (especially industries and big users).
  - In agriculture, state identified need for 800,000 round hay bales for livestock; Tobacco Trust Fund allocated \$500,000 for transport of bales with grant applications used to determine eligibility of farmers; corporate and faith-based financial donations were collected to set up financial assistance programs for farmers. \$3.5 million made available by Governor to pay for hay-hauling.
  - Legislature looking at possibility of inter-basin water transfers
  - NC Governor Easley Press Release issued on 14 January detailed new actions to combat the drought.
    - Governor told the state's 30 most vulnerable communities that they need to take actions now to ensure adequate water during the potential summer drought
    - Governor directed his Dept of Natural Resources to quickly identify the funding needed to make sure undue amounts of water are not being lost to leaks and other structural problems
    - Governor also requested that public water systems adopt conservation-based rate structures to encourage both residential and commercial customers to save water
  - Virginia's plans and current efforts were discussed and included background of recent droughts, development of the Virginia Drought Assessment and Response Plan, current drought impacts, Governor's Emergency Declaration, resources in readiness, water system problems exacerbated by drought and potential funding and other resources to mitigate the impacts of the drought situation. [Limited Exemption of Hours Worked for Hay and Feed Carriers](#)

**State Warning Point:** Normal operations

**Local Liaison:** VDEM Region Four Coordinator is attending the monthly water planning/drought issues meetings held by the Lenowisco Planning District Commission and is monitoring the change in the Town of Dungannon water infrastructure issue.

### EMERGENCY SERVICES BRANCH

**ESF 4 – Firefighting:** *Wildfire activity in Virginia has been unusually high. The Virginia Department of Forestry reports 363 wildfires burned 9,847 acres and damaged 6 homes and 13 structures since 1 January 2008. Forestry officials and localities responded to approximately 300 wildfires during the period 9 February – 12 February.* Officials remain

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concerned about how current conditions may impact wildfire potential during the month of February and what that may mean for Virginia's spring wildfire season. The Commonwealth's 4 p.m. Burning Law goes into effect 15 Feb. 2008, the start of spring fire season in Virginia. This law prohibits burning before 4 p.m. each day (Feb. 15 – April 30) if the fire is in, or within 300 feet of, woodland, brush land or fields containing dry grass or other flammable materials. [Outdoor Fires Unlawful Before 4 p.m.](#); [Local Burn Ban Restrictions](#); [VDOF Fire Summation Report 13 Feb 08](#)

**ESF 8 – Public Health & Medical Services:** Virginia Department of Health and Office of Drinking Water continue to monitor and stand by for consultation and coordination. ***VDH looked at the Town of Dungannon's daily demand and water plant capacity in reference to an adequate storage tank and suggested to the Town Engineer that the 250,000 gallon tank could be replaced with a 100,000 gallon tank. VDH also recommended that a glass lined steel storage tank be considered if the option of total replacement is chosen.***

### **HUMAN SERVICES BRANCH**

**ESF 11 – Agriculture and Natural Resources:** Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services reports that producers are concerned about low subsoil moisture and the dry trend does not help prospects for the 2008 growing season. Hay is still short in supply and farmers continue to struggle with the shift in economics coming from skyrocketing values for hay and fertilizer. Feed supplies for livestock continue to be tight as stored feed is being depleted and could be non-existent by spring if these supplies are not purchased soon. As a result of the hay shortages caused by the 2007 drought, the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission has allocated \$500,000.00 to livestock producers in the Southwest Virginia counties of Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Grayson, Lee, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and Wythe. All Virginia localities have access to federal drought disaster assistance. [VDACS Drought Related Information](#); [VDACS Hay Clearing House](#)

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries reports no significant change in stream flows or reservoir levels related to recreational activities. All boat access ramps are open in spite of the lower water levels. Stocking of trout continues on schedule. Significant winter/spring precipitation events are needed to provide adequate recreational opportunity and aquatic habitat during the spring fishing and fish spawning period.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT BRANCH**

**ESF 1 – Transportation:** The Virginia Department of Transportation and the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles jointly authorized a temporary waiver of registration and license requirements along with normal weight and width restrictions for the purpose of ensuring essential emergency relief supplies reach the disaster area in a timely manner. [Waiver to Carriers Specifically Transporting Hay and Feed Products within the Commonwealth](#)

**ESF 3 – Public Works & Engineering:** The Virginia Department of Health has not reported any impacts to public water supplies that have compromised their ability to provide the needs of their customers. 44 systems have initiated water conservation measures; 13 mandatory water conservation requirements and 31 voluntary water conservation requirements. The reduction in conservation requirements is likely reflective of decrease water demands during the winter season and is down from a high of 64 systems in November 2007.

Current moisture deficits coupled with a dry winter could result in significant drought impacts across all socio-economic sectors in the spring of 2008. ***The persistence of severe to exceptional drought contributed to numerous wildfires in Virginia and North Carolina. Drought conditions in Virginia remained unchanged from last weeks Drought Monitor report with severe and extreme drought conditions affecting Southwest, South Central, Central and Eastern Virginia.*** [US Drought Monitor - VA](#); [US Seasonal Drought Outlook](#)

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Waterworks are encouraged to develop water conservation and contingency plans and local governments are encouraged to adopt local water conservation ordinances. [DEQ Water Conservation Tips](#)

DEQ chairs the Drought Monitoring Task Force and is conducting monthly conference calls to monitor the drought impact and issues a monthly drought report. [DMTF Report 22 January 2008](#)

### PLANNING SECTION

**Situation/Documentation Unit:** Preparing and distributing weekly Situation Reports, monitoring WebEOC entries and maintaining situational awareness. ***Next Situation Report will be issued Thursday, 21 February 2008.***

### LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Wise County declared a local emergency on 31 October due to drought conditions that have caused a severe raw water supply shortage to retail water customers in Wise County. The Mayor and Town Council of Appalachia along with Wise County declared a water emergency and implemented conservation measures and prohibited non-essential water usage. An Emergency Virginia Water Permit was issued by the VA Department of Environmental Quality that permits withdrawal of 500,000 gallons per day from the Powell River and pumps it to their reservoir. The permit is valid for one year, however, if mandatory water conservation measures cease, the permit is invalid. Towns of Appalachia and Big Stone Gap are working on an interconnecting pipe with an estimated cost of \$500,000.

The Town of Dungannon and Scott County declared a local emergency on 9 November due to a water infrastructure issue involving the Town of Dungannon water system. The Virginia Rural Water Association has loaned leak detection equipment and staff to assist with leak detection operations that are on-going. The boil water notice remains in effect. Scott County Emergency Management reported on 5 February that the public water supply storage tank level had dropped to less than 2 feet out of 39 feet when full. The water tank had been averaging 29 during the on-going leak detection operations. Examination of the ground level tank revealed what appeared to be holes in the bottom of the tank and water personnel determined that the water tank is losing the bulk of the water pumped into the system. Repairs were made to the bottom of the tank on 25 June 2007. ***Two quotes for replacing the tank floor and one quote for total tank replacement are being sought by town officials. Tank repairs and painting will take at least 30 days, up to 45 days. The Town Engineer is also developing plans for temporary service.*** Pumping operations will continue, however, it will be difficult to gain any water storage capacity in the tank. The town has not requested any assistance from Scott County or the Commonwealth.

Lee County reported to the VDEM Region 4 Coordinator that at their current rate of water usage they would be out of water within 30 days. Lee County has not declared a local emergency and has not requested any official assistance at this time. The intake pipe at KVS Quarry needs to be relocated to deeper water. VDEM Recovery and Mitigation is assisting with contacts for possible funding sources to provide financial assistance in relocation of the intake pipe. Lee County has a contract with the Arthur-Shawnee System in Tennessee as an alternate source of water. Lee County is working on an agreement with the Town of Jonesville as an alternate source of water.

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